

Brussels, 5 December 2024
(OR. en)

16265/24

VETER 153

NOTE

From: Presidency
To: Delegations

Subject: AOB item for the meeting of the "Agriculture and Fisheries" Council of 9 and 10 December 2024:
Work in the veterinary field under the Hungarian Presidency
– *Information from the Presidency*

In recent years, several animal diseases appeared and reappeared in Europe. Not mentioning all of them, African swine fever and bluetongue disease have significant impacts on animal health and on economy, while highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) may raise public health concerns as well. With the increasing number of animals destroyed due to eradication and control measures and the said public health concerns, the broader society also expects effective measures to prevent such outbreaks in the short and in the long term.

The current Trio Presidency decided to address these expectations via a number of exercises.

As regards vaccination, the Spanish Presidency followed up on the Council conclusions on highly pathogenic avian influenza¹, and held a workshop² with stakeholders on emerging vector-borne diseases. The conclusions included the need for an integrated One Health action plan for reducing risks and disease burden, the integration of epidemiological data, the development of efficient control programmes and the adaptability of the relevant legislative acts.

¹ 8955/22

² Surveillance of vector borne diseases - An European workshop in the frame of One Health Day

The Belgian Presidency held a Ministerial conference³ on biosecurity and vaccination, concluding that biosecurity and vaccination are two tools that must become the pillars of alternative strategies to mass slaughter in the management of infectious epidemics on farms. The outcome of the conference reconfirmed that biosecurity not only plays a role in the prevention and control of animal diseases, but it also contributes to the reduction of the use of antimicrobials and to preservation of animal welfare. It is, after all, amongst key elements of the One Health approach. The Belgian Presidency concluded that Member States need to work together, with trading partners, to remove the obstacles, particularly economic ones, that currently hinder the use of preventive vaccination against avian influenza. It was further recalled that actions are needed, as part of a One Health approach, to stimulate the wide-scale use of the tools that are now available to us: biosecurity, vaccination and surveillance.

The Hungarian Presidency convened a joint meeting of EU, EFTA and Western Balkans Chief Veterinary Officers to share experiences on the measures to control, eradicate and prevent outbreaks of transboundary animal diseases. Recent years have provided possibility for valuable experiences on cross-border collaboration in particular as regards vaccination against lumpy skin disease or rabies. The Hungarian Presidency concluded that joint and cooperative approaches are needed to effectively fight transboundary animal diseases and that the EU's support to capacity building of veterinary services in the close neighbourhood is highly valuable and appreciated.

In addition, the Hungarian Presidency held a conference on vaccination⁴ with stakeholders. Recent experiences with vaccination against highly pathogenic avian influenza, bluetongue, and rabies were shared. Vaccine manufacturers, meat industry representatives, farmers' and veterinarians' organisations expressed their views and expectations. Participants highlighted that the importance of vaccination as one of the preventive tools is rising constantly. To enhance the preparedness to be able to use vaccines to protect animals and to maintain safe international trade is of great importance.

³ Ministerial conference „biosecurity and vaccination: essential tools in prevention, control and eradication of animal diseases”

⁴ Vaccination as a preventive tool against transboundary animal diseases

As regards the Animal Health Law⁵, the Spanish and the Belgian Presidencies initiated discussions as regards cleaning and disinfection during transport, and maintaining disease-free statuses with vaccination.

The Hungarian Presidency collected information on and summarized the Member States' experiences of the first three years of the Animal Health Law's application. Administrative practices under the regulation, movement of specific species and disease measures were all covered in this exercise. Although the majority of Member States have experienced some challenges or wish for more flexibility in certain areas, there were no major obstacles identified in the legal framework.

Based on the above work, the Hungarian Presidency considers it important to continue strategic discussions on measures combatting transboundary animal diseases in the EU and in its close neighbourhood; and on the effective use of preventive tools to limit the impacts of animal diseases and to maintain safe international trade of animal products at the same time.

⁵ Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health (Animal Health Law)